DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 205 434 SO 013 504

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TITLE The Educational System of Costa Rica. Education Around the World.
INSTITUTION Department of Education, Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO E-80-14005
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 34p.
AVAILABLE FROM Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402 ($2.25, Stock Number 017-080-02085-8).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Comparative Education: Developing Nations: Educational Finance: Educational Philosophy: Educational Policy: *Educational Practices: Educational Trends: Elementary Secondary Education: Foreign Countries: Higher Education: Literacy: Preschool Education: Tables (Data): Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *Costa Rica

ABSTRACT

This booklet reviews Costa Rica's educational system, with emphasis on finance, philosophy, administration, and teacher education. The basic educational system consists of a preschool level of at least one year: a general basic education level of nine years (divided into three cycles of three years duration each--the first two cycles represent elementary education and the third cycle completes a student's general education): a more advanced level of two or three years duration, offering options such as health, fine arts, media, sciences and letters, business, industry, and agriculture: and the final level of higher education, which includes preparation of varying duration for professional careers. Funds to administer the educational system are provided by the General National Budget Law. In 1976, the education budget, excluding supplementary budgets for higher educational institutions, represented over 29% of the national budget. Costa Rica's educational philosophy reflects the nation's historic dedication to orderly constitutional government, democratic principles, and human rights. Tangible evidence of this philosophy can be found in Costa Rica's literacy rate of 90%--one of the highest in Latin America. The educational system is administered in accordance with policy determined at the national level by the Higher Council of Education and executed by the Minister of Education. Teacher education, a part of the higher education system, varies according to the curriculum and objectives of the three public universities. Currently, efforts are being made to coordinate educational planning at all levels so that Costa Rica's limited resources will be used to the best advantage. (DB)

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ED205434

Publication No. E-80-14005

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The Educational System of Costa Rica

by

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SO 013 504

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

This report was supported in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the Department should be inferred.

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON: 1980

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

Stock Number 017–080–02085–8

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Costa Rica: 1980

The Country and the People

Official Name: Republic of Costa Rica.

Location: In Central America between Nicaragua and Panama.

Size: 19,700 square miles in area (slightly smaller than West Virginia).

Main Subdivisions: 7 Provinces.

Official Language: Spanish.

Population: 2 million (1976 estimate).

People: Predominately Spanish: other Europeans, mestizo, Negro, American Indian, Chinese.

Literacy Rate: 90 percent.

Religion: Predominately Roman Catholic.

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The Basic System

Historical Background

Costa Rica's importance on the world scene is not based on its size or its physical resources but on its historic dedication to orderly constitutional government, democratic principles, and human rights. These values are sustained and nurtured by an educational system dedicated to the same goals. For years Costa Rica has claimed that it has more teachers than soldiers, more schools than barracks. Tangible evidence for this claim can be found in its literacy rate of 90 percent, one of the highest in Latin America, and in its allocation of some 30 percent of its national budget to education. In a region where many countries have lacked political stability and in a world where the trend toward executive-type governments appears undeniable, Costa Rica has continued stable and steadfast in its support of democracy and education.

Legal and Constitutional Basis

The Constitution of Costa Rica lays down the following basic principles governing education in that country:

Public education is an integrated process, correlating the various cycles from preschool to university.

Education is free in the general basic and diversified cycles (grades 1 through 12) and compulsory from age 6 through 14.

Direction of public education is the responsibility of the Higher Council of Education (*Consejo Superior de Educación*).

The autonomy of universities is guaranteed.

Educational opportunities are to be equalized through economic stimuli and other types of assistance.

Private education is subject to supervision by the state.

The Fundamental Law of Education (*Ley Fundamental de Educación*—1957) sets forth the principal objectives of Costa Rican education, while the Organic Law of the Ministry of Education (*Ley Orgánica del Ministerio de Educación Pública*—1965) prescribes how the Ministry of Education should be organized to administer the educational system.

Executive Decree No. 3333–E of 1973 delineated a plan of action leading to qualitative changes in the various cycles as well as administrative reforms until 1980. Called the *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Educativo* (National Educational Development Plan), it provided the rationale and framework for sweeping educational reforms by (1) asserting the importance of education as an instrument of economic as well as cultural development, (2) advocating that education become more universally accessible, and (3) calling for a parallel system of education to serve the needs of those not served by the formal structure, particularly in vocational training. Specifically, it recommended a general basic 9-year cycle of universal and compulsory education to be followed by a 3-year diversified cycle that would offer adolescents choices in planning their careers. It called for expanding higher education facilities to attend to demands of a rapidly increasing student population and for decentralizing them to serve regional needs.

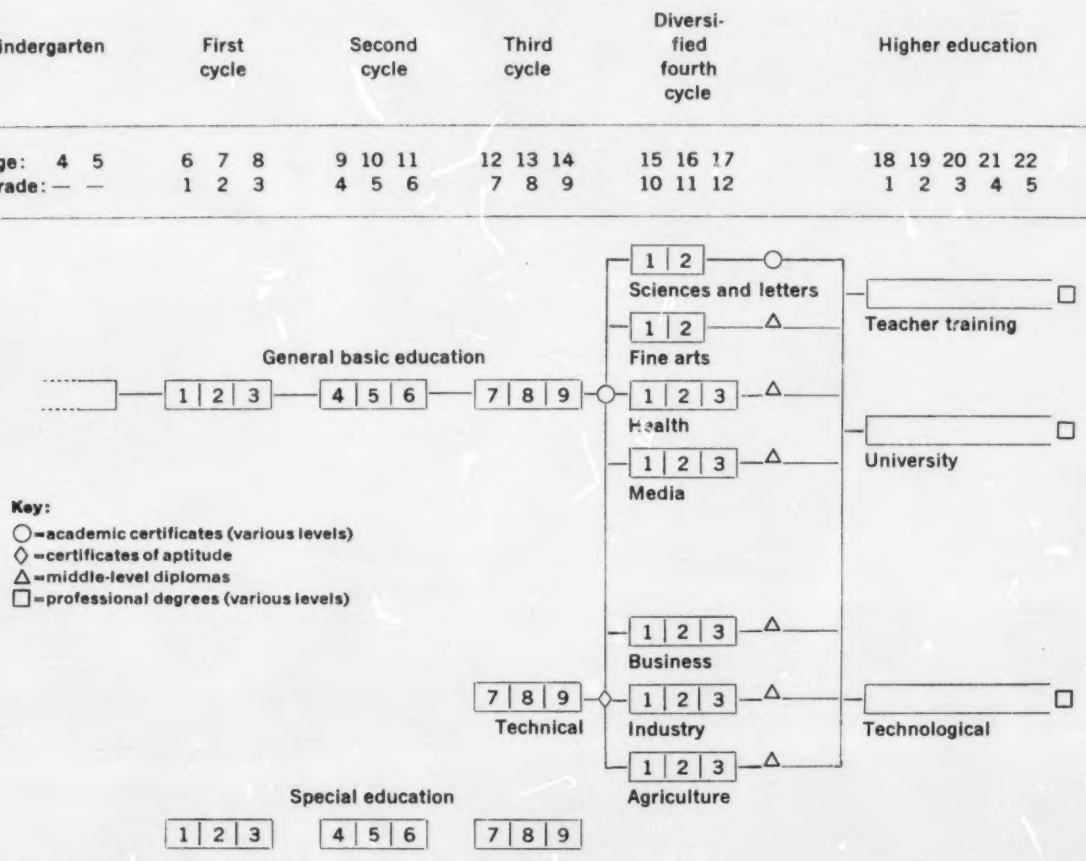
The National Educational Development Plan viewed education as an integral part of national development plans. It was a blueprint for action, and many of its proposals have already been implemented, as will be seen in the discussion of different aspects of the education system later in this publication.

Administration

Education policy at the national level is determined by the Higher Council of Education and is executed by the Minister of Education, whose principal function is to carry out policies initiated by that body. The Ministry of Public Education is also charged with implementing the constitutional and legal provisions relating to education. Within the Ministry specific functions are delegated to general directorates for planning and educational development, for academic education, for instructional activities and services, and for professional technical education.

Implementation of the 1973 National Educational Development Plan necessitated changes in the adminis-

The basic formal educational structure in Costa Rica: 1979



Source: Adapted from publications of the Ministerio de Educación Pública and Consejo Nacional de Rectores.

trative structure to bring about more effective liaison among the national, regional, and local levels. To this end, a network of 16 *Direcciones Regionales de Enseñanza* (Regional Directorates of Instruction) was created to insure that the system functioned effectively in both its administrative and technical aspects. These regional directorates, which have charge of all educational activity in a given region, superseded *Direcciones Provinciales de Escuelas* (Provincial Directorates of Schools), whose responsibility was mainly administrative.

Financing

Funds to administer the educational system are provided by the general national budget law. In 1976 the education budget represented 29.2 percent of the national budget, an increase of 6.7 percent over the percentage in 1971.[1] Not included in these percentages are the extraordinary budgets for higher education institutions. In addition to subsidies from the State and municipalities, other sources of funds for education come from slaughter of cattle (*destace de ganado*) fines, rents, sale of property, and a percentage of inheritances, including a share of those not claimed.

Structure

As indicated in the accompanying chart, the structure of the education system consists of:

1. A preschool level of at least 1 year.

[1] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Informe Nacional: Movimiento Educativo: 1974–76*. Anexo tres.

2. General basic education of 9 years, divided into three cycles of 3 years' duration each. The first two cycles perform the function of elementary education. The third cycle completes a student's general education. Although it aims to prepare for life, it is not considered terminal, since the opportunity remains open to pursue the next cycle.

3. A fourth cycle of 2 or 3 years' duration, known as the diversified cycle, offering choices of several options: Health, fine arts, media, sciences and letters (academic), business, industry, and agriculture.

4. Higher education, which includes preparation of varying duration for professional careers.

Special education is intended for children and adolescents whose physical, mental, emotional, or social characteristics are atypical. It requires not only the use of specially adapted methods and materials but also the preparation of teachers in that field. The aim is to integrate special education with the regular system where feasible. A report of the Ministry of Education, *Memoria 1977*, reveals that special education is an active and growing field. Among recent developments are better diagnosis of atypical children, improved orientation programs for parents, and upgrading of teacher qualifications through seminars, special courses, and other means, including a visit by 12 teachers of mentally retarded children to special education programs in the State of Louisiana.

Private Education

Private schools are authorized but are subject to inspection by the State. The Higher Council of Education must approve their programs of study, authorize the award of certificates and titles that have legal validity, and exercise necessary vigilance to ensure the professional qualifications of administrative and teaching personnel.

The Fundamental Law of Education stipulates that private schools be democratic in orientation and admit students without distinction of race, religion, social position, or political creed.

Private education accounts for only a small part of the total education enterprise (see table 1).

Language of Instruction

The language of instruction is Spanish. Private schools using a foreign language as the medium of instruction are required to give at least half of their instruction in Spanish. Courses in Costa Rican geography and history are to be taught by Costa Rican nationals, and only teachers whose native language is Spanish are to teach courses in Spanish.

Grading System

The following symbols with their numerical equivalents are used in the grading system for the general basic education cycles:

S—*Sobresaliente* (outstanding): 100
N—*Notable* (notable): 80
Suf.—*Suficiente* (sufficient): 60
I—*Insuficiente* (insufficient): Below 60

In the cycle of diversified education, the numerical scale of 1 to 100 is used with 65 as a minimum passing grade in any of the courses in that cycle, rather than 60 as in the first three cycles.

In the University of Costa Rica, students are graded on a scale of 0 to 10, with 7 as the passing grade. The following symbols are also used:

A. *Curso Aprobado* (course passed)—used only for courses that do not carry credit and have no numerical value in the grading system.

P. *Reprobado* (failed)—without a right to a special exam. Generally applies to courses with laboratory or other type of participation where some requirements are not fulfilled. In the numerical scale the symbol P is equivalent to 5 for purposes of calculating averages.

RJ. *Retiro Justificado* (justified withdrawal)—used when the student is authorized to drop a course without penalty within deadlines specified in the university calendar.

E. *Escolaridad Ganada* (condition)—used in cases where a student has not passed a course but has no marks below 6. A grade of E authorizes him to take further exams and to enroll in the following course even though the course in which he has an E is a prerequisite.

Enrollments

Since 1965, Costa Rica has experienced a declining birthrate, and further declines are predicted, as shown by these census data for the birthrate per 1,000 inhabitants: [2]

	Birth rate per 1,000 inhabitants
1960–65	45.31
1965–70	38.27
1970–75	30.95
1975–80 (est.)	29.05
1980–85 (est.)	28.11

[2] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Memoria* 1977. P. 26.

Data for the population by age group also show a gradual decline predicted for the near future: [3]

	6–11 years	*12–14 years*	*15–17 years*
1970	318, 727	137, 864	120, 077
1975	337, 969	161, 700	148, 100
1980 (est.)	325, 551	169, 980	166, 657
1985 (est.)	334, 692	159, 782	164, 416

As these data would suggest, enrollment pressures have eased since 1975 in the 6 through 11 age group (Cycles I and II). However, it is expected that the high birthrate period before 1965 will continue to cause some increase in enrollments for the upper grades during the next few years.

Enrollment figures for 1977 are given in table 1 and will be discussed more fully by level in the following pages.

Table 1.—Number of schools and students, preschool through Cycle IV, by level or type: 1977

	Schools			Students		
	Total	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private
Total	3, 618	3, 486	132	534, 593	513, 659	20, 934
Kindergarten	416	381	35	18, 971	17, 046	1, 925
Cycles I and II	2, 865	2, 798	67	367, 026	357, 217	9, 809
Night schools for adults:						
Cycles I and II	109	109	—	7, 596	7, 596	—
Cycles III and IV	228	198	30	141, 000	131, 800	9, 200

Source: Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Informe Nacional*. Conferencia General de la UNESCO. San José, Costa Rica: October 1978. Pp. 57–59.

[3] Ibid. P. 28.

Preschool Education

Preschool, or kindergarten, education is usually of 1-year duration. Its enrollment has more than doubled since 1971, but kindergartens continue to be mainly in urban areas. From 1971 to 1977 the number of kindergartens grew from 210 to 416; enrollment increased from 9,148 to 18,971; and the number of kindergarten teachers increased from 279 to 598.[4] It is estimated that the population of age 6 was 54,317 in 1977.[5] Assuming that the population of age 5 was near that number in 1977, kindergarten enrollment in that year represented less than one-third of that group. Despite the doubling of enrollment since 1971, it still lags behind the goals of the National Educational Development Plan, which postulated 20,000 in 1975 and 30,000 in 1980, with the major expansion to come in rural areas.[6]

The objectives of kindergarten education are stated in the Fundamental Law of Education as follows:

1. To protect the health of the child and stimulate his/her harmonic physical development.
2. To encourage the formation of good habits.
3. To stimulate and guide self-expression.
4. To cultivate esthetic sentiments.
5. To develop attitudes of comradeship and cooperation.
6. To facilitate the expression of the child's inner-world.
7. To stimulate the development of the capacity of observation.

[4] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Informe Nacional, 1978.* Pp. 57–59.

[5] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Memoria 1977.* P. 30.

[6] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Educativo, 1974.* Pp. 41–42.

General Basic Education

The term general basic education is used to describe the first three cycles, each of 3 years' duration, which are compulsory. Elementary education (*enseñanza primaria*) and secondary education (*enseñanza media*) have been replaced by a total of four cycles, the first two corresponding to what was commonly known as elementary education and the latter two, to secondary education. Teachers in the third cycle are still identified as secondary teachers even though that cycle now forms an integral part of general basic education.

The first two cycles are usually taught in their own buildings, separate from other cycles, or in conjunction with the third cycle. The content of the second cycle has been changed somewhat to articulate with the third cycle since the great majority of pupils continue their studies at that level. The third cycle has tended to become less diversified and more an extension of the general education of the first 6 years.

Cycles I and II

Elementary education includes the first two cycles of general basic education and accounts for over two-thirds of the enrollment below the postsecondary level (not including special and nonformal education).

The goals of elementary education are stated in the Fundmental Law of Education. Many of these extend goals specified for the preschool level, as in the areas of health, personality, habits, attitudes, and esthetic appreciation. Others clearly reflect the national goals of preparing effectively functioning citizens in a democratic society. Examples are:

1. To promote the development of a healthy social life, a willingness to work for the common good, and the affirmation of the democratic character of Costa Rican life.
2. To prepare, in accord with democratic principles, for a just, stable, and elevated family and civil life.
3. To prepare for the world of work and cultivate a socioeconomic understanding.
4. To cultivate spiritual, moral, and religious sentiment, and encourage the practice of good habits according to Christian traditions.

The curriculum for the first two cycles includes the following subjects: language and social studies, sciences and mathematics, esthetics (art, music, dance, drama), practical activities, religion, and optional activities. Practical activities include industrial arts, family life education, agriculture, and physical education. Optional activities include group activities and "democratic participation."

The school week consists of 26 hours of classroom work. In schools with double sessions this time schedule is adjusted. No fixed time is designated for each subject area. Each school determines time allocation, with the approval of the regional directorate, according to local conditions.

In two-teacher schools it is recommended that teachers interchange classes, one teaching science and mathematics, and the other, language and social studies.

The Fundamental Law of Education specifies the criteria and standards of promotion for both public and private schools. Based on a scale of 100 to 1, 60 is a passing grade. Promotion from the second to the third year and from the fifth to the sixth year is based on cumulative grades made in each cycle. In effect, promotion is both on a yearly and cycle basis. Upon completion of the second cycle, the student receives a certificate.

The Ministry report *Informe Nacional* of October 1978 to the General Conference of UNESCO delineates certain enrollment trends for 1971 through 1977 in Cycles I and II. Enrollments increased from 356,143 in 1971 to a peak of 373,901 in 1973 before declining to 367,026 in 1977.[7] The percentage of enrollments in private schools varied from 3.6 to a peak of 3.8 in 1973 and then declined to 2.7 in 1977; the decline after 1973 was due mainly to the fact that schools maintained by banana companies passed into public hands when these companies abandoned certain zones. First grade enrollment declined from 69,576 to 63,327 from 1971 to 1977, reflecting the declining birthrate. The number of teachers in Cycles I and II in 1977 was 12,500, with an average of 28.6 pupils per teacher. Night schools for adults, which operate at the Cycle I

[7] Enrollment figures for Cycles I and II include children under 6 and over 11, and thus are higher than the figures for the 6 to 11 age group even though not all in that age group are enrolled.

and II levels, increased in number from 72 to 109 from 1971 to 1977, but enrollments showed a slight decline from 8,248 in 1971 to 7,596 in 1977.

Table 1 shows a total of 367,026 initially enrolled in Cycles I and II in 1977. Of these, 139,529 were in urban institutions.[8] Unlike kindergarten enrollment, which is predominately urban, enrollments in Cycles I and II are mainly rural, reflecting the geographical distribution of the country's population. San José is the only city with a population of more than 100,000. For the most part, the population is widely scattered, with no massive movements toward a few urban centers as in some other Latin American countries. Despite the dispersed character of the population, schools serve all but a small percentage of the age group 6 through 11, as shown by data for 1973 through 1976: [9]

	Percent
1973	92.2
1974	92.7
1975	92.1
1976	94.9

The dropout rate from Cycles I and II is remarkably low. In 1969 it averaged slightly more than 5 percent, and plans call for a substantial reduction in that figure by 1980.[10]

Of particular concern is the large number of one-teacher schools. Many of these are staffed by teachers called *aspirantes* (i.e., "aspiring" teachers), who lack certification. A questionnaire study that sampled teachers' opinions in the 943 one-teacher schools in 1973 found that their major problems were lack of adequate teaching materials and need for more assistance in the areas of administration, teaching techniques, evaluation, and community-school relationships.[11] To alleviate these problems and to improve supervisory services to rural schools, a program known as "nuclearization" was begun in 1975 in two regions. This entailed grouping rural schools around a "nuclear" school, thereby making more efficient use of teaching materials and supervisory and other support services. The plan is to expand nuclearization gradually to other regions with the hope that rural schools, which often stand at the margin of educational advances, will be brought into the mainstream.

[8] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Bolétin Estadístico* No. 11. April 1978. Cuadros 3 and 9.

[9] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Memoria 1977*. P. 30.

[10] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Educativo*. P. 45.

[11] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Investigación sobre Escuelas de Maestro Unico*. April 1975. P. 12.

Cycle III

The program of Cycle III rounds out the 9 years of general basic education. Considerable attention is given to vocational needs of adolescents who will enter the world of work or take further technical training. Costa Rica is one of the first Latin American countries to institute a program of educational and vocational guidance, which functions mainly at this cycle. The curriculum for general studies in Cycle III is as follows: [12]

	Periods per week*
Total	*38*
Spanish	4
Social studies	4
English	3
French	3
Mathematics	4
Science	5
Industrial arts or family life education	3
Plastic arts	2
Music	2
Physical education	2
Religion	1
Optional activities	5

*Periods are usually 40 minutes long.

Evaluation of student performance is a continuing and cumulative process throughout the cycle. If there are deficiencies at the end of the cycle, a pupil may have to spend a semester or a year in remedial work, without repeating courses in which he has done satisfactory work. Evaluation is conceived as a means of aiding the pupil, rather than as a procedure of determining who should pass and who should fail.

An alternative to the regular program of general studies in Cycle III is a technical program begun in 1971. Its purpose is to help young people enter the world of work in their communities by providing training in agriculture in rural areas, crafts in certain urban areas, and domestic industries for women in both areas. This technical track, composed of general and vocational courses, leads to a certificate of aptitude, but students may continue in the diversified cycle. Schools offering the technical program are situated conveniently to those offering Cycles I and II. Boarding facilities are provided when necessary. By 1980, about 14 percent of the total enrollment in Cycle III was expected to be in technical schools. The expansion of technical schools, however, depends on available fi-

[12] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Educativo*. P. 25.

nancing, since they are more costly than the general education schools of the third cycle.[13]

Upon completing the third cycle, a student receives a certificate attesting to the level and type of program completed. This leads to admission to the next cycle or entry into the world of work.

Cycle III enrollment comes mainly from the age group 12 through 14. Not only has this group expanded rapidly, but an increasing percentage is enrolled, as the following illustrates: [14]

	1972	*1976*
Enrollment in Cycle III	74, 197	102, 738
Population 12 through 14	148, 420	164, 847
Percentage enrolled	49. 9	62. 3

Plans called for increasing the percentage of the age group 12 through 14 enrolled to 78 percent by 1980 in order to work toward the goal of compulsory education through age 14.[15]

[13] Ibid. P. 41.

[14] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Memoria 1977.* P. 29.

[15] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Educativo.* P. 40.

Cycle IV, The Diversified Cycle

Cycle IV, which completes secondary education, is a diversified cycle of 2 or 3 years' duration that offers a student the following choices of programs:

1. Sciences and letters (academic)—2 years' duration
2. Fine arts—2 years' duration
3. Technical—3 years' duration
4. Health—no information on duration
5. Media—no information on duration

The plans of study for each of the first three programs in the diversified cycle are presented in tables 2, 3, and 4. Each of these three programs has three nuclei: One that is "common" to all students in the program, one in the specialty, and the third in subjects that are considered "complementary" to the specialty. In the fine arts program, specialization is offered in (1) music, (2) drama, and (3) dance, ballet, and plastic arts. The technical program offers specializations in industrial, commercial (business), and agricultural areas. Official publications contain no curricular description of the health and media specializations, which were authorized recently and therefore have not been implemented in the schools.

Evaluation and promotion standards for the diversified cycle are contained in Decree No. 4822E, issued by the President of the Republic on May 8, 1975. To enter the diversified cycle, a student must have satisfactorily completed all courses in the third cycle. Promotion in the fourth cycle is from year to year and subject by subject, rather than by cycle. The grading scale is 1 to 100 with 65 the minimum passing score.

Table 2.—Number of weekly lessons in the diversified cycle, sciences and letters program: 1977

Nucleus/subject	10th yr.	11th yr.
Grand total	39	38
Common:		
Total	29	28
Spanish 1	4	4
Social studies 1	3	3
Mathematics 1	3	3
Sciences 1 [1]	7	3
Foreign language	4	4
Sociology	3	—
Philosophy	—	3
Optional [2]	5	8
Specialty, total	4	4
Complementary:		
Total	6	5
Art (music, plastic arts)	2	2
Physical education	2	1
Group activities	1	1
Religion	1	1

[1] In the 10th year, four lessons in chemistry and three in physics; in the 11th year, three in physics.

[2] In the 10th year, a student elects one of the following four courses: Spanish 2, social studies 2, mathematics 2, and sciences 2 (a laboratory course). In the 11th year, a student elects two of the same four courses, with four lessons per week in each course; sciences 2 is a physics course.

Source: Adapted from Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Informe Nacional 1977.* Anexo cuatro.

Table 3.—Number of weekly lessons in the diversified cycle, fine arts program: 1977

Nucleus/subject	10th yr.	11th yr.
Grand total	50	50
Common:		
Total	24	24
Spanish	4	4
Social studies	4	4
Mathematics	4	4
Sciences	5	5
Foreign language [1]	4	4
Philosophy	3	3
Specialty:		
Total	20	20
Theory of the arts	10	10
Practical arts	10	10
Complementary, total [2]	6	6

[1] English or Italian.

[2] Includes "group activities and democratic participation" with courses in physical education, religion, gardening, horticulture, class advisory, etc.

Source: Adapted from Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Informe Nacional 1977.* Anexo cuatro.

Table 4.—Number of weekly lessons in the diversified cycle, technical program: 1977

Nucleus/subject	10th yr.	11th yr.	12th yr.
Grand total	42	42	42
Common:			
Total	18	12	12
Spanish	3	2	2
Social studies	3	2	2
Mathematics	3	3	3
Sciences [1]	6	3	3
Foreign language	3	2	2
Specialty, total	20	26	30
Complementary:			
Total	4	4	—
Art	1	1	—
Physical education	1	1	—
Religion	1	1	—
Group activities	1	1	—

[1] In the 10th year, three lessons in physics and three in chemistry.

Source: Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Informe Nacional 1977.* Anexo cuatro.

In determining grades, a percentage value is assigned to the following in all nuclei:

	Percent
Assignments	20
Work in class, shop, laboratory	20
Short tests	30
A comprehensive semester test (theoretical and functional)	30

Students who fulfill all requirements receive from the Ministry of Education either an academic certificate specifying level of achievement if they have completed the science and letters program or a middle-level diploma indicating the branch of study selected and the specialization within that branch if they have completed any of the other programs. The aim of these evaluation standards and procedures is to guarantee some quality control among the graduates from this cycle, the last before entering higher education or a vocation.

Official publications usually combine Cycles III and IV in reporting statistical data. The Ministry of Public Education's *Informe Nacional* of October 1978 provides the most recent data on the current situation and trends since 1971. Enrollments are broken down as follows: *Académica diurna* (academic day schools), *académica nocturna* (academic night schools), and *técnica* (technical schools). The academic category includes enrollments in the general education program of Cycle III and the sciences and letters program of Cycle IV. The technical category groups together the technical students in both cycles and the fine arts students in Cycle IV without a breakdown into subcategories. (The new health and media programs were not yet in operation.)

Table 5 shows that from 1971 to 1977 the number of public Cycle III and IV (secondary) schools increased markedly, while the number of private schools and students declined. Although enrollment in academic day and night schools increased by more than 50 percent from 1971 to 1977, technical enrollment nearly quadrupled. Dropout rates declined significantly from 1971 to 1977, although remaining relatively high in academic night schools.

Secondary technical education data for 1977 are as follows.[15]

	Students	*Schools*
Total	[1] 27, 893	68
Agricultural	18, 339	49
Industrial and commercial	9, 554	19

[1] Ibid. The enrollment of 27,893 is at variance with the total of 27.1 thousand reported in table 2. No explanation was given for the discrepancy.

[15] Ministerio de Educación de Pública. *Memoria 1977*. P. 141.

Table 5.—Number of schools and students and percentage of dropouts in Cycles III and IV combined: 1971 and 1977

	1971			1977		
	Students	Schools	Percentage of dropouts	Students	Schools	Percentage of dropouts
Total	85, 500	142	11. 3	152, 300	228	7. 4
Academic (day)	60, 300	—	9. 7	94, 500	—	5. 8
Academic (night)	18, 000	—	16. 7	30, 700	—	13. 0
Technical	7, 200	—	7. 4	27, 100	—	6. 6
Public:						
Total	74, 200	101	—	142, 700	198	—
Academic (day)	51, 000	—	—	86, 400	—	—
Academic (night)	16, 800	—	—	29, 500	—	—
Technical	6, 400	—	—	26, 800	—	—
Private:						
Total	11, 300	41	—	9, 600	30	—
Academic (day)	9, 300	—	—	8, 100	—	—
Academic (night)	1, 200	—	—	1, 200	—	—
Technical	800	—	—	300	—	—

Source: Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Informe Nacional*. Conferencia General de la UNESCO. San José, Costa Rica: October 1978, pp. 57, 59.

Of the 49 schools that were agricultural, 9 were *Institutos de Capacitación Agropecuaria* (Institutes of Agricultural Training) at the Cycle III level. Of the 19 that were industrial and commercial, 5 were designated as *Institutos de Capacitación Técnica Industrial* (Institutes of Technical Industrial Training) at the Cycle III level. Technical enrollment represented about 23 percent of the total enrollment at the secondary level (Cycles III and IV). Given the needs for technically trained people in a developing economy, it can be expected that technical education will receive increasing emphasis.

The Parallel System

Parallel to the formal system exists a nonformal system (*parasistema*), intended particularly for adults. Provision is made for interchange between the systems. At the level of Cycles I and II, there are night schools, a system of open schooling (*escolaridad libre*) to qualify for diplomas and certificates, multipurpose rural centers (*centros polivalentes rurales*), and functional education and literacy training projects. At the Cycle II level there are Saturday schools and music instruction. At the level of Cycles III and IV there are night schools, multipurpose rural and urban centers (*centros polivalentes rurales y urbanos*), open schooling, functional education and literacy training, special programs of the National Institute of Apprenticeship, and basic music studies. All are provided under public auspices. The private sector also offers opportunities for adult study in commercial, technical, and craft subjects.

Through the parallel system, adults may qualify for a certificate by completing a program called *Educación Básica por Suficiencia* (Basic Education by Sufficiency), considered the equivalent of completion of Cycles I and II, or by earning the *Bachillerato por Madurez* (Diploma by Maturity), considered the equivalent of the certificates or diplomas awarded after completion of Cycles III and IV in the formal system.

Higher Education

History

Higher education in Costa Rica does not have a long history. The oldest of the present-day universities, the University of Costa Rica, was founded in 1940 following a series of events dating back to 18 , when the *Casa de Estudios de Santo Tomás* (House of Studies of Saint Thomas) was founded. In 1843 this institution became the *Universidad de Santo Tomás de Costa Rica*, which was abolished in 1888. Only the School of Law continued to operate, and to this were later added other professional schools. When the University of Costa Rica was founded in 1940, it assumed responsibility for all higher education and remained the only higher education institution until 1968, when the *Escuela Normal Nacional Superior* (National Higher Normal School) was established. Since then, social, economic, and demographic changes have increased the demand for trained personnel in other specialties. In 1971 the *Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica* (Technological Institute of Costa Rica—ITCR) was founded, to be followed 2 years later at Heredia by the *Universidad Nacional* (National University—UNA), for which the National Higher Normal School was the original institution.

Since 1973 two other institutions have been added. A private university, the Autonomous University of Central America (*Universidad Autónoma de Centro América*—UACA) began operation in 1976, and in 1977 the State University at a Distance (*Universidad Estatal a Distancia*—UNED) began operation, but with a different concept for providing higher education (to be discussed later). From a single university in 1968, higher education has evolved into a complex of five universities, four public and one private.

This rapid expansion has created a need for greater coordination and cooperation among the higher education institutions. To that end, a National Council of Rectors (*Consejo Nacional de Rectores*—CONARE) was founded in 1975. The publications of that organization have provided the data for much of this section on higher education, except for facts concerning the two most recently established universities, whose rectors were not members of that council as of 1979.

Other institutions besides the five mentioned offer higher education studies up to the bachelor's degree level. All require a certificate of completion of secondary studies for admission. Together they constitute the parallel system of higher education, which will be discussed later in this section.

Admissions

In general, to be admitted to public institutions of higher education, a student must have a diploma indicating completion of Cycle IV, pass an admission examination, and provide evidence of good health. In addition to these general requirements, a student must meet whatever specific requirements may be stipulated by each institution for admission to a particular area of study.

Admission policies are dictated partially by economic and social demands. Consideration is given to overall development plans in which the training of professional leaders plays a key role, to the capacity of the country to absorb professionals in various categories, to the country's limited resources to finance expanded higher education facilities, and to the number of graduates of Cycle IV who desire to pursue higher education. It is part of Costa Rica's democratic tradition to maximize access to higher education. (In 1976, a Special Fund for Financing Higher Education was created by law. This fund was distributed in 1977 as follows: UCR, 66.04 percent; UNA, 22.52 percent; and ITC, 11.44 percent.)

Mindful of these considerations, the National Council of Rectors in its National Plan of Higher Education for the period 1976 to 1980 recommended that:

1. An average of 85 percent of Cycle IV graduates be admitted. (About 19,000 applications for admission are expected in 1980.)
2. The number of new students admitted to the main campus of the University of Costa Rica be limited to 4,600 per year.

3. The Technological Institute admit about 5 percent of the graduates of Cycle IV each year.
4. The university regional centers admit mainly those from the regions being served.
5. The National University admit the remainder of the 85 percent Cycle IV graduates to be admitted.

These recommendations appear somewhat ambitious considering that total enrollment in postsecondary education was less than 43,000 in 1976. Rapid increase of the age group 18 through 25 will continue to exert pressure for expanded facilities.

Enrollment Trends

In 1976, enrollment in postsecondary education was 42,282 students, of whom 36,562 (86.5 percent) were in the formal system and 5,720 (13.5 percent) in the parasystem. The formal system at the higher education level is defined to include those institutions qualified by law to offer the bachelor's, licentiate, master's, and doctor's degrees. The parasystem includes those institutions that offer only the bachelor's and lesser degrees. In 1970, the total number enrolled in higher education was 18,170, of which 87.4 percent were in the formal system. Overall enrollment more than doubled from 1970 to 1976. A breakdown of enrollment among the three public CONARE institutions in 1977 shows: [17]

	Number	*Percent*
Total	38,811	100.0
University of Costa Rica	28,378	73.1
National University	9,180	23.7
Technological Institute of Costa Rica	1,253	3.2

Regional university centers attached to the above institutions have grown rapidly from 188 students in 1968 to 5,603 in 1977. (Enrollment figures for the centers are included in the tabulation.) The percentage of the age group 18 to 25 attending universities increased from 5.8 to 10.9. The increase in the number of university professors (full-time equivalent) from 325 in 1970 to 1,987 in 1977 was more than 500 percent.

Expansion Plans

The rapid expansion of university enrollment prompted the three CONARE universities (UCR, UNA, and ITCR) to seek a loan of $30 million in 1977 from the Inter-American Development Bank to modernize the higher education system in terms of development needs. In support of the loan request, which was approved, CONARE presented elaborate statistical data on the status of higher education and plans for the future. The loan was to be used to help decentralize higher education by creating more regional centers that would offer programs geared to the needs of each region, particularly in agricultural and technical vocations. Part of the loan was to be used for administrative installations and library services in UCR; for construction of a university city in Heredia, headquarters of UNA, and a regional center in San Isidro attached to UNA; and for establishment of a regional center in San Carlos attached to ITCR as well as educational installations in Cartago, the main site of ITCR.

Degrees and Titles [18]

Three levels are used to categorize academic courses of study: *Pregrado, grado, posgrado* (predegree, undergraduate degree, graduate degree). *Pregrado* includes those courses of study of short duration (*carreras cortas*) for which diplomas may be given but which do not earn the holders the distinction of being considered professionals. Undergraduate degrees include the *bachillerato* (bachelor's degree), which is given after a course of study, usually of 4 years, and the *licenciatura* (licentiate), which is given normally after a total of 5 years of postsecondary study. Graduate degrees are the *maestría* (master's), which usually requires 2 years beyond the bachelor's degree, and the doctor's degree, which demands 1 or 2 years of study beyond the master's. Titles merely indicate the area of professional competence, such as *profesor de enseñanza media* (secondary teacher) or *ingeniero civil* (civil engineer). In their diplomas, institutions decide according to their own criteria whether to emphasize the title or the degree level.

At the end of short courses (*carreras cortas*), which have a minimum of four semesters and are terminal in nature, the Council of Rectores (*CONARE*) recommends that students be designated as *diplomados* (diploma holders) rather than *tecnicos* (technicians) or some other title commonly used at the secondary level or in the parallel system.[19]

[17] CONARE. *Proyecto Educación Superior/BID*. July 1977. II, 22–23.

[18] CONARE. *Nomenclatura de Grados y Titulos en la Educación Superior*. September 1977. III:819.

[19] Ibid. VII:7.

Credit requirements for various courses of study are indicated below: [20]

	Credits
Extension and training	–45
Short courses (*carreras cortas*)	60–90
Bachelor's degree	120–144
Licentiate (beyond bachelor's)	30–36
Master's (beyond bachelor's)	60–72
Doctoral (beyond bachelor's)	100–120

The University of Costa Rica (UCR)

The largest and oldest university with about 75 percent of total university enrollment is the University of Costa Rica. Its main campus is located in Ciudad Universitaria Rodrigo Facio in San José. As part of a movement to decentralize educational facilities, it established the following *Centros Regionales* (regional centers):

Centro Regional de Occidente in the province of Alajuela
Centro Regional de Guanacaste
Centro Regional del Atlántico in the province of Cartago

UCR's academic program is organized around five areas: arts and letters, basic sciences, social sciences, engineering and architecture, and health. Within each of these areas are *facultades* (colleges), with their component schools and institutes. Of the total enrollment of 28,378 in 1977, the component with the largest enrollment was the School of General Studies, with 3,064 students. This is explained by the fact that 1 year of general studies forms the base for many academic programs. Next in order of enrollment were the College of Engineering, with 3,163; the College of Social Sciences, with 2,970; the College of Economic Sciences, with 2,720; and the College of Education, with 2,005. The *facultades* of medicine, odontology, and law had enrollments of 942, 602, and 1,344 students, respectively. The three regional centers accounted for a total of 4,312. In 1977, UCR granted 2,307 degrees and diplomas.

The purpose of the general studies program, which students pursue the first year, is to provide them with a humanistic cultural background that would be useful in any career. Courses include Spanish, fundamentals of philosophy, and history of the culture. In addition, students are expected to develop a critical consciousness about national and Latin American problems. Sports and esthetic activities, for which no credit is given, are also a required component of general studies.

[20] Ibid. Cuadro No. 7.1. A credit is defined by the National Council of Rectors as a unit of scholastic work equivalent to 3 clock hours per week for 15 weeks applied to an activity supervised, evaluated, and approved by the professor.

One advantage of the general studies program the first year is that it permits a more mature choice of a professional career for those who are undecided.

Tuition costs are based on semester credit hours. The charge per credit hour in 1977 was 125 *colones* (about $14.64 U.S.) for Costa Ricans and 358.35 *colones* ($41.96 U.S.) for foreigners for each credit hour up to a maximum of 12. Since many Costa Rican students come from families of modest means, loans and scholarships are available to help equalize educational opportunity.

To secure admission to UCR, students must have a certificate of completion of Cycle IV or its equivalent, pass a test of academic aptitude, submit to a medical examination to assure their health status, and present grades for Cycle IV. A student's advancement in a chosen specialty depends on passing each course with a minimum grade of 7 on a scale of 1 to 10 and on his or her overall average.

University professors are ranked as follows: Instructor, Adjunct Professor, Associate Professor, and Full Professor (*catedrático*). Regarding degrees held, the following shows the number in each category in 1977:

Total	1,109
Bachelor's	96
Licentiate	825
Master's	70
Doctoral	118

The licentiate degree was by far the most common level of preparation, while the doctorate was held by slightly more than 10 percent.

The National University

Universidad Nacional (UNA), an autonomous institution created by law in 1973, incorporated the National Higher Normal School in its central headquarters in Heredia, a short distance from San José. Normal schools functioning at that time in Liberia and Pérez Zeledón have become regional centers attached to UNA.

The academic program is organized around 5 *facultades* (colleges) in which are grouped 15 schools, 2 institutes, and 6 departments. The 5 *facultades* are as follows:

Philosophy and Letters
Social Sciences
Exact and Natural Sciences
Sciences of the Land and Sea
Health Sciences

The School of Education belongs to the *Facultad* of Philosophy and Letters, while a School of Veterinary

Medicine belongs to the *Facultad* of Health Sciences. A Center of General Studies coordinates the general studies offerings of the first year, which is required for most academic programs and therefore has heavy enrollment.

Total enrollment in UNA increased from 3,584 in 1973 to 9,180 in 1977. Enrollment for 1977:

	Enrollment	*Percent*
Total	9, 180	100. 00
Center for General Studies	3, 821	41. 62
Philosophy and Letters	1, 686	18. 37
Exact and Natural Sciences	216	2. 35
Health Sciences	123	1. 34
Social Sciences	1, 686	18. 37
Sciences of Land and Sea	536	5. 84
Regional centers	1, 112	12. 11

Notable are the high enrollments in philosophy and letters (which includes education) and in the social sciences, compared with the other science areas.

A Council of Admissions determines the number of students to be admitted each year. Directors of Cycle IV schools are asked to nominate a number of prospective students on the basis of grades and interest in UNA. From these nominations a list is compiled of potential enrollees, who are then interviewed by professors of UNA at their schools. About 25 percent of the nominees are selected. By this procedure, UNA can assure the admission of students of limited resources and from all backgrounds, especially those from rural and marginal urban areas. For 1978, UNA had to limit its admission to 1,500 students because it lacked facilities to accommodate more. In 1976, more than half the students came from families with a monthly income of 2,000 *colones* (about $234 U.S.) or less. Furthermore, over half the students came from families of 6 to 11 persons, and 30 percent of the students' fathers were unskilled workers. These data are evidence of efforts to secure a broad representation of the society at large.

Tuition costs are based on credit hours, with a maximum charge per credit of 125 *colones* ($14.63 U.S.). Other expenses include a prematriculation fee of 35 *colones* ($4.10 U.S.), a graduation charge of 100 *colones* (about $12 U.S.) for a bachelor's degree, and 300 *colones* for the licentiate degree. Because of these charges, it is necessary to provide loans and scholarships for students of modest means.

Teaching personnel are ranked below with minimum requirements for each rank:

Instructor: Bachelor's or licentiate
Professor 1: Licentiate and 2 years' experience
Professor 2: Academic doctorate or licentiate with experience and graduate studies
Catedrático (full professor): Academic doctorate, 10 years' experience, and scholarly production

In 1977, 68 percent of the professors were full-time.

UNA is authorized to award degrees at the highest academic level. In a listing of degrees awarded from 1973 to 1976, the highest degree awarded was the licentiate, and there were comparatively few of those. Of the 764 degrees and titles awarded in 1976, 484 were in education. The next largest number was 178 in the social sciences. Since UNA is a recent creation, it will take time to build enrollments in newly created specializations.

The Technological Institute of Costa Rica

ITCR (*Instituto Tecnológica de Costa Rica*) is an institution offering higher education studies leading to professional and middle-level technical careers. It began operation in 1973 in Cartago, some 20 miles from San José. In 1975, it assumed direction of the Technical Agricultural School of Santa Clara and in 1976 established its first regional center in San Carlos, in the province of Alajuela.

The Institute's principal objective is to supply technological instruction to satisfy the needs of industry, mining, and agriculture, leading to increased production and socioeconomic development.

The academic organization of ITCR consists of Divisions and Departments. The following are charged with preparing professionals at the bachelor's level in different specialties:

Division of Administrative and Industrial Careers
Division of Agricultural and Forestry Careers
Department of Construction
Division of Basic Studies
Research and extension are carried on by the following:
Center of Technological Research
Department of Extension
Technological Publications
Center of Technological Information.

Enrollment has grown rapidly in ITCR from 87 in 1973, when it began, to 1,253 in 1977. The number of specialties has increased from 3 to 12.

To be admitted, a student must have graduated from Cycle IV or its equivalent, passed an entrance examination, provided a transcript of his or her grades in Cycle IV, and had an interview.

Most of the students are male, reside in the central zone of the country, and come from families of modest resources. Tuition and other costs are comparable to those at UCR and UNA. A large majority require loans for tuition and monthly support.

The 1,253 students enrolled in 1977, including the 179 in the regional center of San Carlos, were distributed as follows:

	Number	*Percent*
Total	1,253	100
Construction	158	13
Industrial maintenance	183	15
Industrial production	116	9
Wood engineering	64	5
Administration	129	10
Agricultural administration	68	5
Administrative computation	75	6
Electronics	53	4
Agricultural engineering	90	7
Forestry engineering	83	7
Agronomy	127	9
Teacher training in technical education	107	9

Students study for a bachelor's degree in one of these areas in a 3-year program in which the first year consists of general studies. (An exception is the area of teacher training, a 4-year program operated in collaboration with the University of Costa Rica, which provides the pedagogical instruction. Upon completing their studies, students receive the title *Profesor de Educación Técnica* (Teacher of Technical Education). The grading scale is on the basis of 0 to 100, with 70 considered passing.

The degrees held by the academic staff of 119 were distributed in 1977 as follows: bachelor's, 71: licentiate, 42; master's, 5; doctoral, 1. Most of the staff are recent engineering graduates with industrial experience but no teaching experience.

In a country dedicated to industrial and agricultural development, ITCR plays a strategic role by preparing professionals in both areas.

State University at a Distance [21]

Created by law in 1977, *Universidad Estatal a Distancia* (UNED) is the newest public university authorized to confer all levels of university degrees and titles. Modeled after such institutions as the Open University of the United Kingdom and the *Universidad Nacional de Educación de Españã*, UNED offers a different delivery system for higher education. Instead of students coming to the university, it comes to them in the form of texts, exercises, and tests. Consultation is available by visits, telephone, or letters.

As the programs develops, small academic centers will be established in different parts of the country to provide for each a small library, audiovisual materials, and tutorial services. Evaluation is in the form of self-tests and other tests, especially final exams, which will be graded by UNED.

Text materials come to the student in the form of teaching units carefully prepared by specialists and tried out on students before being processed for production. Cassettes and equipment for home experiments are supplied where necessary.

UNED operates on a 15-week cycle, making it possible to complete a semester's work in each cycle. During 1978 only the basic cycle was offered, which is equivalent to the general studies offered in the first year at universities; it consisted of basic mathematics, basic Spanish, social sciences, and natural sciences. The cost of the basic cycle in 1977 was 750 *colones* ($87.82 U.S.) for tuition and 410 *colones* ($48 U.S.) for materials.

Since UNED is new, no information was available on enrollments. Universities in Costa Rica are clustered in the central zone in or near San José, but the population is widely dispersed. In recognition of this fact, UNED makes higher education accessible wherever the student may be. For 1978–79, UNED planned to offer these programs:

1. Public Administration, with emphasis on bank administration: a 2- or 3-year program leading to a diploma.
2. Education: a 4-year program for teachers in Cycles I and II, leading to a bachelor's degree.
3. Educational Administration: a program consisting of three periods of 15 weeks each for those who may already have a university degree.
4. Environmental Education: a program consisting of short courses for those whose work concerns the environment, such as forestry inspectors, park policemen, and sanitation inspectors.

The Autonomous University of Central America

Unlike the four public institutions previously discussed, the Autonomous University of Central America (*Universidad Autónoma de Centro América*—UACA), located in San Jose, is a private institution. Authorized to grant degrees at all academic levels, it began operation in 1976. Its rector, like the rector of the State University at a Distance, does not belong to the *Consejo Nacional de Rectores de Educación Superior* (CONARE).

UACA is an institution dedicated to providing instruction in the sciences, letters, and the arts. It is a collection of affiliated schools, each of which is autonomous administratively and financially but subject to academic standards dictated by the central adminis-

[21] UNED. *Guía Académica.* 1978.

tration. Its name gives an indication of its intended international outreach.

Admission is based on completion of the secondary level or its equivalent. Areas in which students may pursue degrees are business administration, public administration, architecture, fine arts, public accounting, law, economics, classical philology, English philology, Romanesque philology, philosophy, geography, medicine and medical sciences, and journalism. All students must demonstrate by examination their ability to read and translate a modern language as a prerequisite for a bachelor's degree. The academic year is divided into three segments of 4 months each.

For each of the areas in which degrees are offered there is a *Consejo Académico* (Academic Council) composed of four teachers, the Minister of Education or his representative, the Rector of the University, and a representative from the professional school offering the degree. The four teachers may be from outside the University. These Academic Councils determine the content of the examinations for degrees and supervise the overall operation of professional schools.

To earn a *bachiller* (bachelor's) degree, a student must complete at least 72 academic units. Each *cuatrimestre* (4-month period) comprises 12 academic units. The degree of *licenciado* (licentiate) or *maestro* (master's) requires at least 48 more academic units. Examinations for degrees are before a *jurado* (examining committee) named by the Academic Council and composed of five teachers, of whom two are to be from outside the university.

The *decano* (dean) is the highest administrative official in each *colegio* (professional school) with authority over the professors but not over the students. The official with authority over the students is *el maestrescuela* (the schoolmaster), who is director of studies and is named by the professors in each professional school.

Three different systems of instruction are used in the various professional schools. One is the traditional method of lecture. A second is study under the supervision of a tutor for each course. The student's work consists mainly of independent research, and lessons are more in the form of seminars than lectures. A third method employs the use of a single tutor who supervises the student's work in all courses.

Enrollments in all the various degree programs at the beginning of the second *cuatrimestre* in May 1978 exceeded 1,160, almost all at the bachelor's level. Law, business administration, and architecture accounted for more than half of these. Most of the students and professors are part-time. Organized along traditional academic guidelines, UACA offers an alternative in a system of higher education dominated in size and numbers by the public universities.

Parallel Higher Education

As stated earlier, the formal system of higher education by definition includes those institutions authorized to award graduate degrees; the others are part of the parallel system. For the most part, the latter institutions functioned without coordination and control until 1973, when a section of supervision was set up in the Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Public Education with authority to supervise private schools offering programs at the bachelor's level. At that time one public institution, the *Escuela Técnica Agrícola de Santa Clara* (Technical Agricultural School of Santa Clara), was considered part of the parallel system, but in 1975 it became part of the *Instituto Technológico de Costa Rica* and, therefore, part of the formal system. The parallel system operates under private auspices and concentrates mainly on commercial and business specializations, areas where demand is great and cost of providing training relatively low. Most of these institutions are located in or near the metropolitan center of San José.

According to a publication of the National Council of Rectors (*Plan Nacional de Educación Superior 1976–80*) enrollments in the parallel system have averaged around 14 percent of the total higher education enrollment. Although many of these institutions award titles and degrees, including the licentiate, these titles and degrees are not recognized in the formal education system. The publication cited above lists the institutions in table 6 as components of the parallel system. In each case the enrollment is given for 1975 or for the latest year information was available.

Table 6.—Number of students in parallel higher education institutions, by field of specialization: 1975 or year of most recent data

Field/Institution	Number	Year of data
Commerce		
American Business Academy	1, 100	1975
Boston Business College	207	1975
Escuela Castro Carazo	987	1975
Centro de Estudios del Istmo (Center of Isthmian Studies)	112	1973
King's College	75	1974
Lincoln Junior School	10	1973
Escuela Manuel Aragón	284	1973
Escuela Profesional de Administración y Comercio	58	1973
Escuela Superior de Ciencias Contables (Higher School of Accounting Sciences)	750	1973
Administration		
Instituto Técnico de Administración de Negocios (Technical Institute of Business Administration)	342	1973
Instituto de Capacitación de Seguros (Institute of Insurance Training)	248	1973
Technical Education		
Escuela Técnica Nacional	17	1973
Religious Education		
Centro Adventista de Estudios Superiores	94	1973
Instituto Pedagógico de Religión	104	1975
Instituto Teológico de América Central	126	1975
Seminario Bíblico Latinamericano	126	1975

Source: National Council of Rectors, *Plan Nacional de Educación Superior 1976–80.*

Teacher Education

Teacher education is part of higher education. There are no normal schools at the secondary level as commonly found elsewhere in Latin America. Those that did exist have been absorbed by universities or converted into regional centers. Teacher education is a function of the three public universities, each of which prepares teachers for one or more levels according to its own plan.

A publication of the Ministry of Public Education [22] criticized the lack of a coordinated plan of teacher education among the various universities involved. It also pointed out that many teachers had no preparation beyond the secondary level or minimal professional training. It further criticized the failure to adjust the supply of teachers being prepared to the changing demands.

Teachers are classified in three categories according to their preparation:

1. *Profesores titulados* (teachers with titles) possess a degree or professional title, awarded by the universities or recognized by them or by the Higher Council of Education.
2. *Profesores autorizados* (authorized teachers) do not possess a title or a specific degree for teaching but have other qualifications such as degrees in fields other than education.
3. *Profesores aspirantes* ("aspiring" teachers) are those who do not belong to either of the above categories but are hired because they are needed and available.

It is the responsibility of the universities to prepare teachers of the first category and to upgrade the qualifications of those in the other two, the latter being a responsibility shared with the Ministry of Public Education.

The National Educational Development Plan, which went into effect in 1974, emphasized the need to upgrade the qualification of inservice teachers in terms of the demands of the new education structure. Specifically, it recommended that much of the inservice training be in locations where teachers were working to facilitate their attendance; that a system of credits be used to promote professional and economic advancement; and that a study be made of the feasibility of establishing a permanent center of inservice education, with the collaboration of institutions preparing teachers.

A Ministry of Public Education annual report, *Memoria 1977*, indicates considerable progress toward improving the percentage of certified teachers by comparing the percentage of teachers having formal certification in 1973 and 1975.

[In percent]

	1973	*1975*
Cycles I and II	86.9	90.0
Cycles III and IV	72.8	78.2

A Ministry of Public Education publication [23] describes a bachelor's degree in education as requiring 4 years of study and containing an average of 145 credit hours divided as follows: 12 percent in general studies; 32 percent in pedagogical studies; 50 percent in the specific area of instruction; and 6 percent in complementary studies.

The licentiate degree program in education last 1 year longer. It is a continuation of the bachelor's degree and requires 33 more credit hours in the area of teaching and 12 credits in a foreign language.[24]

In practice, variations from these standards will be noted as the preparation programs for different levels are examined. Three universities are involved in teacher preparation: The University of Costa Rica (UCR), the National University (UNA), and the National Technological Institute of Costa Rica (ITCR). UCR and UNA prepare teachers for all levels. ITCR has a cooperative program with UCR to prepare secondary teachers in technical subjects. UNA, since it was formed from the base of normal school which it incorporated, continues to emphasize teacher preparation as its principal function.

Preparation of Preschool Teachers

Both UCR and UNA have bachelor's degree programs of 4 years' duration to prepare kindergarten teachers. The program that went into effect in 1977 at UCR is given in table 7. It is built on a general

[22] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Educativo*. 1974. P. 51.

[23] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Informe Nacional 1977*. P. 7.

[24] Ibid.

Table 7.—Semester hours per course required for the bachelor's degree in preschool education, at the University of Costa Rica: 1977

Course	Semester hours
Semester I	
Integrated course (general studies)	6
Fundamentals of sociology	2
Seminar on national realities	3
Principles of education (philosophical tendencies)	3
Sports activity	—
Semester II	
Integrated course (general studies)	6
Seminar on national realities	3
Modulation of the spoken voice and voice culture	2
Orientation and administrative functions	3
Semester III	
Cultural activity	1
Techniques of educational communication	2
Historical fundamentals of preschool education	2
Development of the child	3
Educational technology and audiovisual lab	3
Body expression	2
Nutrition and health of preschool child I	2
Principles of education	3
Semester IV	
General methods	3
Problems of learning	3
Seminar on national realities	2
Mental hygiene in education	2
Nutrition of preschool child II	2
Children's literature	4
Semester V	
Sciences in preschool I	3
Language arts in preschool I	3
Social studies in preschool I	3
Mathematics in preschool I	3
Principles of preschool evaluation	3
Semester VI	
Sciences in preschool II	3
Language arts in preschool II	3
Social studies in preschool II	3
Mathematics in preschool II	3
Plastic arts in preschool I	2.5
Physical education in preschool I	2.5
Musical education in preschool I	2.5
Semester VII	
Plastic arts in preschool II	2.5
Music in preschool II	2.5
Physical education in preschool II	2.5
Programs for preschool	3
Principles of preschool administration	3
Student teaching seminar	2
Semester VIII	
Professional experience	10

Source: University of Costa Rica. *Catálogo Universitario Tomo I.* 1977. Sec. D. 4. Pp. 34–36.

studies base in the first year (semesters I and II) and concludes with a semester (semester VIII) devoted to professional experience for which 10 semester hours of credit are allotted. In 1976, the UCR conferred the title of *Profesor de Educación Escolar* (Preschool Teacher) on 20 students, and the UNA in the same year awarded 22 *Bachilleres en Enšenanza Preescolar* (Bachelors in Preschool Teaching) and 9 *Licenciados en Enšenanza Preescolar* (Licentiates in Preschool Teaching). As indicated by the number of degrees and titles conferred, enrollments in the area of preschool teaching are relatively small compared with those of other levels, but they can be expected to grow in response to the official policy of increasing the number of kindergartens.

Preparation of Cycles I and II Teachers

UCR and UNA also prepare teachers for Cycles I and II, where most teachers are employed. UNA conferred the title of *Profesor de Enseñanza Primaria* (Elementary Teacher) on 365 prospective teachers in 1975, but that number had dropped to 60 in 1976 because of the declining need for teachers at this level.[25]

[25] CONARE. *Proyecto Educación Superior/BID*. III–93.

The 3-year preparation program consists of 1 year of general studies and 2 additional years. The Centro Regional de Guanacaste and the Centro Regional de Pérez Zeledón, formerly normal schools but now part of UNA, offer similar 3-year programs also leading to the title of Elementary Teacher as well as 2-year programs for partially qualified inservice teachers leading to a bachelor's degree in general basic education (Cycles I and II) and in educational administration.

UCR conferred the title of Elementary Teacher on 16 students in 1976 and the Bachelor in the Sciences of Elementary Education on 38 in the same year.[26] Its bachelor's program for elementary teachers allows the student to select an "emphasis" from language, sciences, social studies, or mathematics. Regardless of the emphasis selected, students pursue a cycle of general studies and education courses common to all emphases. Table 8 shows the common cycle of the bachelor's program along with the courses of each emphasis.

[26] Ibid. Pp. 39–41. Titles are conferred on the basis of completion of a terminal program that does not qualify for a bachelor's degree.

Table 8.—Credits per course for the bachelor's degree in the sciences of elementary education (emphases in language, arts, sciences, social studies, or mathematics), at the University of Costa Rica: 1977

Course	Credits
Common cycle	
Cultural activity	—
Sports activity	—
Spanish	5. 3
Fundamentals of philosophy	5. 3
History of culture	5. 3
Repertoire of letters	2
Health education	2
Corrective Spanish	2
Problems of Costa Rican education	2
Techniques of oral and written communication	4
History and philosophical foundations of education I	3
History and philosophical foundations of education II	3
Psychology of education I	3
Psychology of education II	3
Eurhythmy	1
Preparation of teaching materials	2
Sciences of elementary education I	4
Social studies in elementary education	4
Children's literature	4
Arts in elementary education	40
Language arts	4
Mathematics in elementary education I	4

Table 8.—Credits per course for the bachelor's degree in the sciences of elementary education (emphases in language, arts, sciences, social studies, or mathematics), at the University of Costa Rica: 1977—Continued

Course	Credits
Social studies emphasis	
Music in elementary education	4
Audiovisual education	2
Language arts II	4
Sciences in elementary education II	4
Mathematics in elementary education II	4
Community education	4
General and special methods	4
Geography of Costa Rica	3
History of Costa Rica	3
History of America	3
A repertoire of letters	2
A repertoire of biological sciences	2
Educational evaluation and measurement	4
Fundamentals and structures of the curriculum	4
Fundamentals of school administration	4
Mental hygiene	4
Seminar	2
Seminar and practice teaching	10
Regional world geography	3
Universal history	4
Sciences emphasis	
Music in elementary education	4
Audiovisual education	2
Language arts II	4
Mathematics in elementary education II	4
Botany and zoology	4
Community education	4
General and special methods	4
General biology (theory)	3
General biology (laboratory)	1
Educational evaluation and measurement	4
Fundamentals and structures of the curriculum	4
Fundamentals of school administration	4
Mental hygiene	4
Seminar	2
Seminar and student teaching	10
Geology and cosmography	4
Physics and chemistry	4
Language arts emphasis	
Music in elementary education	4
Audiovisual education	2
Sciences in elementary education II	4
Language arts II	4
Mathematics in elementary education II	4
Community education	4
Hispanic American literature I	3
Hispanic American literature II	3
Spanish grammar	3
Repertoire—social sciences	2
Repertoire—biological sciences	2
Spanish grammer II	3
Educational evaluation and measurement	4
Fundamentals and structures of the curriculum	4
Fundamentals of school administration	4
Seminar	2
Seminar and student teaching	10
Costa Rican literature I	3
Costa Rican literature II	3

Table 8.—Credits per course for the bachelor's degree in the sciences of elementary education (emphases in language, arts, sciences, social studies, or mathematics), at the University of Costa Rica: 1977—Continued

Course	Credits
Mathematics emphasis	
Music in elementary education	4
Audiovisual education	2
Sciences in elementary education II	4
Language arts II	4
Community education	4
General and special methods	4
Modern geometry I	5
Arithmetical theory I	4
Modern mathematics	4
A repertoire—biological sciences	2
A repertoire—social sciences	2
Educational evaluation and measurement	4
Fundamentals and structures of the curriculum	4
Fundamentals of school administration	4
Mental hygiene	4
Seminar	2
Seminar and student teaching	10
Modern geometry II	4
Arithmetical theory II	4

Source: *Catálogo Universitario. Tomo I.* 1977. Sec. D. 4.

Preparation of Cycle III and IV Teachers

All three universities (UCR, UNA, and ITCR) prepare teachers for the secondary level. The specializations are usually in a single subject or in a combination, such as history and geography. ITCR, in collaboration with UCR, which supplies the pedagogical courses, prepares teachers in technical subjects. An example of a bachelor's degree plan for preparing secondary teachers is given in table 9.

Special Education

Teacher preparation programs are also available in various branches of special education. Students at the University of Costa Rica may earn a bachelor's degree in the science of special education with an emphasis in one of the following: learning problems, mental retardation, and communication disorders. No specific prerequisites are indicated for any of the above programs. Teachers of special education are in growing demand because of continuing unmet needs in this area.

Teacher Supply

A persistent concern is to adjust the supply of teachers to the needs of the schools. The National Educational Development Plan in 1974 called attention to the imbalance in various areas.[27] It pointed out that the number of elementary teachers being trained was in excess of need, while there was a growing need for teachers in Cycle IV, particularly in the technical subjects. It also criticized lack of sufficient attention to preparing kindergarten teachers, special education teachers, guidance counselors, librarians, audiovisual specialists, directors, and administrators.

A recent publication of CONARE estimates the demand and supply situation for 1985 for various types of teachers.[28] Elementary teachers will be in considerable oversupply as will some secondary teachers. Kindergarten teachers and university professors will be in slight oversupply, but special education teachers will be in serious undersupply. Teachers of sociology, history, geography, anthropology, psychology, and social studies will be in great oversupply.

[27] Ministerio de Educación Pública. *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Educativo.* 1974. P. 51.

[28] CONARE. *Proyecto Educación Superior/BID.* P. vi–48.

Table 9.—Credits per course for the bachelor's degree in secondary education in history and geography, at the University of Costa Rica: 1977

Course	Credits
General studies	
Integrated course (Spanish, philosophical foundations, and history of the culture)	12
Artistic activity	2
Sports activity (first semester)	0
Sports activity (second semester)	0
General economics I	2
General economics II	2
Introduction to sociology	6
History of the institutions of Costa Rica	4
History (required)	
Introduction to techniques of studying history I	2
Introduction to techniques of studying history II	2
Colonial history of Latin America I	3
Colonial history of Latin America II	3
Contemporary history of Latin America I	3
Contemporary history of Latin America II	3
History of contemporary Costa Rica I	3
History of contemporary Costa Rica II	3
Methods and techniques of historical research	3
Methods and techniques of historical research II	3
General social and economic history	3
Modern history I	3
Modern history II	3
Elective courses (3 credits minimum)	
Economic and social history of Costa Rica I	3
Economic and social history of Costa Rica II	3
Economic and social history of Latin America I	3
Economic and social history of Latin America II	3
Geography (required)	
Introduction to geography	3
Physical geography	3
Human geography	3
Regional geography of Costa Rica	3
Geography of underdevelopment	3
Analysis of topographical maps	3
Elective courses (3 credits minimum)	
Analysis of statistics	3
Regional geography of Latin America	3
Other	
Citizenship training I	3
Citizenship training II	3
Education	
Problems of Costa Rican education	2.5
Historical and philosophical foundations of education I	3
Historical and philosophical foundations of education II	3
Psychology of education I	3
Psychology of education II	3
General and special methods in history and geography	4
Seminar and student teaching—social studies	10

Source: *Catálogo Universitario. Tomo I.* 1977. Sec. D. 4.

Problems and Trends

Educational development in Costa Rica is not without problems. The nation has limited resources. In its development plans, education must compete for funds with agriculture, roads, communications, energy, maritime industries—all in need of funds for development. The population is mainly agricultural and widely dispersed. One-room rural schools where classes are taught by minimally prepared teachers receiving minimal supervision and assistance are still widely prevalent despite the oversupply of elementary teachers who prefer urban living.

Providing secondary and university education to a widely dispersed rural population is costly and difficult for any country, but in Costa Rica the difficulty is aggravated by mountainous terrain and lack of transportation and communication. Higher education has expanded rapidly in the last decade at heavy financial cost, so that a coordinated plan is necessary to prevent overlapping and the waste of limited resources.

However, the education scene in Costa Rica demonstrates that the nation is moving ahead in significant ways:

1. The enthusiasm for and continuing support of education are evidenced by the fact that about 30 percent of the national budget is earmarked for schools.
2. A current literacy rate of about 90 percent indicates success in providing basic education to the masses.
3. National objectives and educational objectives are clearly linked. The commitment to democracy, constitutional government, and human rights is reinforced by the schools; development plans involve close collaboration between university and Government officials; and the policy to reduce the rate of population growth has been successful, possibly in large part because of instruction in the schools on family planning.
4. Recent steps toward decentralizing higher education illustrate the movement toward equalizing educational opportunity throughout the country.
5. In its economic development plans, Costa Rica has put high priority on developing human resources through education.

Glossary of Selected Educational Terms

Bachillerato	First university degree, usually requiring 4 years of postsecondary study
Bachillerato por madurez	Diploma awarded for completion of secondary level through adult education programs
Carrera corta	Subprofessional program not leading to a university degree
Centros polivalentes	Multipurpose centers in adult education
Ciclo diversificado	Fourth cycle, offering several tracks
Doctorado	Highest university degree
Educación básica por suficiencia	A certificate program for completion of Cycles I and II of general basic education through adult education
Educación general básica	First of three cycles of elementary-secondary education, compulsory for ages 6 to 15
Enseñanza primaria	Elementary education—the first two cycles of general basic education
Enseñanza secundaria	Secondary education—the third and fourth cycles
Escolaridad libre	Open schooling, a variety of procedures for adults to achieve equivalency of basic education
Estudios generales	Foundation courses in humanities, science, and social sciences offered in the first year at the university as a prerequisite for various specializations
Facultad	Academic unit of a university authorized to grant degrees and title
Grado	University degree
Licenciado	Holder of a *licenciatura*
Licenciatura	The university degree requiring usually 1 year beyond the *bachillerato*
Maestría	A graduate degree requiring usually 2 years beyond the *bachillerato*
Parasistema de educación	Parallel system of education designed to provide adults with the equivalency of the formal system at the elementary and secondary levels. At the postsecondary level it includes those institutions not authorized to grant advanced degrees
Posgrado	Graduate program beyond the level of the *bachillerato* and the *licenciatura*
Profesor asp.rante	Teacher in service who does not belong to either of the two categories below
Profesor autorizado	Teacher who does not have a university title or degree for teaching but has other qualifications considered equivalent
Profesor titulado	Teacher with a degree or title awarded by a university or recognized by a university or the Higher Council of Education
Título	Title, designating the area of training of a recipient of a diploma or degree

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U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1980 O - 317-787